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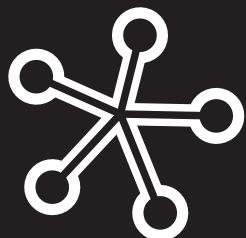
Amsterdam Institute for
Advanced labour Studies



Solidarity in the 21st century POPULATION AGEING, IMMIGRATION AND SOLIDARITY

More or less strangers. Social distance as reflected in news media reporting on the young, the old and the allochthon

Dorota Lepianka



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More or less strangers

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On the series ‘Solidarity in the 21st Century’

The research programme ‘Solidarity in the 21st Century’ of the Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Labour Studies focuses on the effects of changes in the composition of the population due to immigration and ageing on the public support for social solidarity. It is often claimed that increasing diversity of the population erodes solidarity, because people do not recognize other people who differ in some important characteristics from themselves, as members of their own community. However, there are only few studies that have attempted to test directly the relationship between diversity and solidarity.

This research program aims to analyse the effects of the changing composition of populations on both informal and formal solidarity. It examines which motives, conditions and circumstances are beneficial or detrimental for sustaining solidarity within and between different groups in society. The apparent discrepancies between immigrants and natives on the one hand, and the elderly and the young on the other hand, may seriously affect the willingness of citizens to support or help fellow citizens who belong to a different ethnic group or age category. Members of various groups may find it difficult to relate to each other, and fears that one group will benefit unequally from the other may grow.

By combining different research methods – qualitative case studies, statistical analyses of large scale surveys, laboratory experiments, media content analysis – this research project investigates the different conditions and motives for solidarity. The focus of the research is on solidarity between immigrants and natives, and between the elderly and the young. Solidarity is defined broadly as any act that purposefully benefits another person at a cost for the agent, without any guarantee of an equivalent return. Some examples of solidarity are alms-giving to a beggar, helping your neighbour, voluntary community work, donating money to a charity organization, paying an insurance premium and paying taxes.

The research programme ‘Solidarity in the 21st Century’ includes statistical analyses of cross-country surveys, qualitative field studies in several neighbourhoods that differ in composition, laboratory experiments of a solidarity game and a content analysis of the representation of different groups (old, young, allochthones) in mass media. The (provisional) results of most of these studies will be published in the AIAS Working Paper series.

The research programme is made possible by a grant from Stichting Instituut Gak.

For further information on the research programme ‘Solidarity in the 21st Century’ see the programme’s website www.solidariteit.info.

Abstract

In an attempt to shed more light on the nature of solidaristic relations between various groups in Dutch society, the paper examines the media-conveyed images of the young, the old, the autochthon (i.e. native) and the allochthon (i.e. non-native) population. The investigation rests on the assumption that by voicing specific norms and values, and presenting a particular image of social life in a society, media contribute to the creation and maintenance of symbolic boundaries between groups, thus influencing the nature of inter-group relations. The results show minor dissimilarities in the media presentation of the old and the young, yet considerable differences in the presentation of the allochthon and autochthon characters. In comparison to allochthon actors, autochthon characters are awarded a more prominent position in the news, enjoy a more heterogeneous presentation and a more positive overall evaluation. There are also considerable differences in the presentation of various sub-groups of non-ethnically Dutch characters, with Turks enjoying the most favourable descriptions and Moroccans most unfavourable ones. Of particular relevance to the study of inter-groups relations are differences in the media presentation of negative and positive characteristics of various groups. The findings indicate that evaluations of the groups under study differ not only in their quantity or intensity but also in their content and gist (e.g. hostility vs. incompetence in case of negative evaluations). The results are interpreted in the light of literature on social distance and social practices of “othering”.

1. Introduction: why media analysis?

The role of the media in contemporary societies is hard to ignore. It is only because of the fact that public perception and evaluation of various social phenomena frequently correspond to their presentation and interpretation in the media (cf. Golding and Middleton 1982; Clawson and Trice 2000; Sotirovic 2001). Various researchers draw attention to a peculiar relation between media discourses and public opinion (e.g. Golding and Middleton 1982; Kennamer 1994; Lemert 1994; Tipton 1994; Gilens 1996, 1999; Clawson and Trice, 2000; Bullock et al. 2001) as well as (mass) behaviour (e.g. van Ginneken 2003; Braun and Koopmans 2010). It is, for example, frequently claimed that media portrayal of specific social groups (and especially minorities) is influential in shaping people's perceptions of those groups – predominantly because of lack of direct contact and exchange with those groups and ensuing reliance on hear-say and the media as main sources of knowledge about them (e.g. d'Haenens and Ogan 2007; cf. Thompson 1995; McCombs and Reynolds 2009). Researchers stress, among others, the framing function of the media, claiming that repeated presentation of specific issues in connection with their attributes is likely to result in audience members' choosing those attributes in evaluating the issues in question (e.g. Entman 1989; van Ginneken 2003; McCombs and Reynolds 2009; McQuail 2010). Moreover, by providing information on society at large “media voice current norms and values and present an image of life in a particular society” (Peeters and d'Haenens 2005:202), thus helping to establish and maintain the relations between the various social groups, such as between the young and the old or between the native majority and ethnic minorities (*ibid.*). By the same token, they may also disturb the formation or preservation of such relations (cf. Braun and Koopmans 2010).

The current study rests on the assumption of an active role of the media in the processes of the (re-) establishment of group boundaries and, in consequence, in reinforcing and/or hindering the creation and/or maintenance of social relations between specific groups within Dutch society. For example, since contact with ethnic minorities appears for large parts of the Dutch population to be a quasi-mediated, unobtrusive experience, i.e. an experience encountered only in the media,¹ it seems plausible that it is predominantly through the media that a socially shared matrix of inter-ethnic relations is constructed and/or reinforced (cf. Lubbers et al. 1998:417-418), if not directly, e.g. by disseminating specific patterns of inter-groups behaviour, then indirectly, by propagating specific group stereotypes.

1 The indirectness of the ethnic experience for large parts of the Dutch population is related to the relative infrequency of inter-ethnic contact between the native Dutch and various migrant groups (e.g. Dagevos and Gijsberts 2010)

Indeed, according to the Stereotype Content Model (SCM) and BIAS map (behaviours from intergroup affect and stereotypes) (e.g. Fiske et al. 2006; Cuddy et al. 2008), the content of stereotypes is of paramount importance to the nature of social interactions. Specific, usually ambivalent, stereotypes elicit unique emotional reactions, which in turn evoke distinctive patterns of behavioural responses. For example, groups stereotyped as incompetent (e.g. indolent, foolish, irresponsible) and cold (i.e. non-benevolent, unfriendly, hostile) elicit contempt and disgust, which might lead to harassment or even attack; groups stereotyped as competent (e.g. skilful, intelligent, determined) yet cold elicit envy, which evokes reactions of obligatory association and convenient cooperation (yet, only as long as the sense of threat remains low); groups seen as warm (e.g. friendly, generous, helpful) but not competent elicit pity, which often results in neglect; and groups perceived as warm and competent evoke admiration and elicit reactions of voluntary association and help.

Although the investigation of the emotions and behaviours elicited by and/or conveyed in the content of media messages remains – for methodological reasons – beyond the scope of the current study, the study does aim at the reconstruction of the (dominant) media representations of certain social groups in hope to shed more light on the nature of inter-group relations in Dutch society. Specifically, the media-conveyed images of three social groups: the young, the old and the allochthon (i.e. non-indigenous population), will be investigated as to their presence, prominence and nature in print, on-line and broadcast news media. Special attention will be paid to similarities and differences in the presentation of various sub-groups, e.g. the (autochthon) young and old, and the autochthon and allochthon youth. Results will be interpreted in the light of literature on social distance and social practices of “othering”.

2. Literature overview and research agenda

The three groups of interest – the old, the young, and the allochthon, have not received an equivalent amount of attention from media analysts in the Netherlands. Most numerous are studies devoted to media representation of ethnic minorities, which investigated the presence and construction of ethnic characters in (daily) press (e.g. Lubbers et al. 1998; d’Haenens and de Lange 2001; Phalet and ter Wal 2004; ter Wal et al. 2005; d’Haenens and Bink 2006; Vliegenthart and Boomhaarden 2007; Saharso and Lettinga 2008) and a variety of TV genres (e.g. Leurdijk 1997; de Bruin 2005; Koeman et al. 2007). Investigation of the Dutch media (re-)construction of older people has been restricted to a series of studies of TV commercials (e.g. van Selm et al. 2007; van Selm and Westerhof 2008; van Selm et al. *date unknown*). And, to my knowledge, there have been but few published studies on the media portrayal of youth (Cornelissen 2000; Verhagen 2000; Wierstra 2001; de Bruin 2005). However, taken globally/internationally, the results of past inquiries into the media representation of the old, the young and the allochthon show considerable correspondence, not only across studies devoted to any specific group (e.g. older people), but also across the groups.

Research on the media portrayals of older people points, rather universally (across countries and media outlets), to the underrepresentation of senior characters relative to their proportion in the population (e.g. Kessler et al. 2004; Rozanova et al. 2006; Zhang et al. 2006; van Selm et al. 2007; Williams et al. 2010). This lack of attention is – in the eyes of researchers – in itself a sign of negativity towards seniors (Pearson 2002), which is further exacerbated by common mis-constructions of older characters. A lot of research on the media portrayal of older people, with a notable exception of studies investigating their portrayal in TV commercials or print magazine advertisements (e.g. Van Selm et al. 1996; Zhang et al. 2006; Van Selm et al. 2007; Williams et al. 2010) or primetime TV series (Kessler et al. 2004), show the predominance of negative stereotyping of senior characters. Most common are the depictions of weakness, frailty and infirmness (e.g. Moutner 2007; Fealy et al. 2012) frequently related to unattractiveness (e.g. Moutner 2007), on the one hand, and victimhood, vulnerability and dependence, on the other (Fealy et al. 2012). By focusing on the presentation of older people as non-self-sufficient and incapable of autonomous living, and by being silent about the contributions of the seniors to the well-being of their families and communities, the media help to construct older people as a problem and a burden to their families, communities and society at large (e.g. Rozanova 2006; Zhang et al. 2006; Martin et al. 2009).

Over the years (and in particular since the 1980s) those negative stereotypes have been increasingly counterbalanced by positive stereotypes of healthy and wealthy elderly, knowledgeable, attractive, content or even happy, active and adventurous (e.g. Kessler et al. 2004; Williams et al. 2010). While this positive tone seems by and large reserved for TV commercials and magazine advertisements, some researchers draw attention to the inherent ambiguity of such images, which further marginalize those of the seniors who are not necessarily affluent, healthy, (fully) self-reliant and/or in a position to age “actively” (Rožanova et al. 2006; Zhang et al. 2006; Williams et al. 2010). Attention has also been drawn to the unrealistic, paradoxical or even grotesque element inherent in many counter-stereotypical depictions, which instead of reinforcing positive images of older people, might (further) ridicule them (e.g. Roy and Harwood 1997; van Selm et al. 2007).

Unsurprisingly, the conclusion of many studies on media depictions of older citizens is that “media tend to portray seniors less positively than younger people” (Rožanova et al. 2006), which might suggest a generally positive media representation of the young. Interestingly, studies on the media construction of youth and younger adults do not confirm such a supposition.

Analyses of media depictions of youth in a variety of Anglo-Saxon, but also other European countries, including the Netherlands, reveal that younger people are frequently subjected to categorisation, (generational) labelling and homogenisation (Mazzarella 2003; Delvin 2005, 2006; Bernier 2011). The issues of difference, e.g., in terms of class, gender and/or sexuality are frequently omitted (Mazzarella 2003; Delvin 2006; Wierstra 2001), which facilitates the generalisation of, usually negative, stereotypes. Being presented predominantly in the context of crime, accidents and/or moral decay, youth tends to be problematized as “troubling” and/or “troubled”; simultaneously a source and an object of public concern (Delvin 2005, 2006; Wayne et al. 2008; cf. Bernier 2011). This is particularly true of ethnic youth (e.g. Wayne et al 2008; Cushion et al. 2011). Moreover, described almost exclusively by external experts and denied a voice, young people remain by and large “powerless over their own image” (Hartley in Mazzarella 2003:236; cf. Levinsen and Wien 2011; Cornelissen 2000; Wierstra 2001; Bernier 2011).

Yet, such a portrayal is not necessarily universal. Discourses of youth encompass also positive images (Delvin 2005, 2006; Wierstra 2001; de Bruin 2005) and a study of youth depictions in Danish newspapers (Levinsen and Wien 2011) revealed an increasing number of positive rather than negative or even neutral representations and a growing tendency to describe young people as individuals rather than gang or group members (a proof of de-homogenization). Still, the positive portrayals of the young seem to be limited to

the specific spheres of social life: sport, culture, entertainment and/or otherwise “non-serious” matters (Wiersta 2001; Wayne et al. 2008) and fail to account for socially positive behaviours, such as being absorbed in family life, active at the workplace, volunteering or providing community service (Bernier 2011). Results of Verhagen (2000), investigating the changing image of Gabbers (a youth sub-culture) in Dutch print media in the 1990s – from moral panic and ostracism to acceptance and mainstream incorporation – suggest that shifts in the media depictions of a generation or a specific youth sub-culture might result from its commodification and absorption into the mainstream culture. Characteristically, they also seem to coincide with the “coming of age” of the members of the specific sub-culture or generation: once no longer young, they stop attracting the negative attention. This does not necessarily imply a change in the media practices regarding the portrayal of “youth”. As noted by Althoff (2005), the discourses of problematisation, dramatisation and/or criminalisation of youth are surprisingly persistent and the phases of positive imaging (e.g. “youth as the future”), while indeed existent, are usually short-lived.

The Dutch media representation of ethnic minorities does not differ much from the above sketched media portrayal of youngsters. According to media analysts, ethnic minorities tend to be underrepresented, especially – although not exclusively – in non-ethnic or ethnically neutral stories dealing, for example, with politics and government (ter Wal et al. 2005). Once present in stories about politics, minority actors rarely feature in the high-ranking and prominent roles of politicians and professionals actively involved in political process, but rather as common people (ter Wal et al. 2005; cf. Leurdijk 1997; Phalet and ter Wal 2004) and targets or recipients of policies (ter Wal et al. 2005). Problematic as well is the general underrepresentation of ethnic voices and their limited discursive opportunities (Phalet and ter Wal 2004; cf. de Lange and d’Haenens 2002; d’Haenens and Bink 2006). As noted by Saharso and Lettinga (2008), even in ‘ethnic’ stories, i.e. stories dealing specifically with ethnic or migrant issues, such as debates about the veil in the Netherlands, migrants, while present, are not necessarily given a chance to influence the tone and direction (or content) of the debate (cf. Leurdijk 1997). Finally, attention has been drawn to the media practices of reporting on ethnic minorities in the context of conspicuous incidents, conflicts, problems and threats (Lubbers et al. 1998; d’Haenens and de Lange 2001; ter Wal et al. 2005; cf. Phalet and ter Wal 2004), with particular emphasis given to crime, various forms of illegality (e.g. in case of asylum seekers), or their cultural and/or religious “otherness” (der Valk 2002; d’Haenens and Bink 2006; Korteweg and Yurdakul 2009). Ethnic minorities are generally over-represented among criminals and deviants, and stories with an ethnic dimension tend to feature more negative portrayals (of the native and non-ethnic actors) than non-ethnic stories (ter

Wal et al. 2005), which strengthens the association of ethnicity with negativity. Furthermore, the negative portrayals are frequently generalised to whole groups (d’Haenens and de Lange 2001; der Valk 2002; ter Wal et al. 2005), e.g. by references to “the” Moroccan migrants, “the” Islam or “the” allochthon. Interestingly, media focus on problems is more pronounced for groups larger in size (Lubbers et al. 1998:423). Explicitly positive images are rather infrequent and reserved for recognized celebrities, especially in sports and/or entertainment; indirect positive portrayals are also sometimes evoked, e.g. by presenting minority members as “constituent members of society who enrich it” (der Valk 2002; cf. Leurdijk 1997).

In general, research assertions about the media construction of various social groups show considerable similarity: both older citizens and ethnic minorities tend to be underrepresented relative to their respective proportion in the population; all three groups – the old, the young and the non-native, are denied voice and hence the opportunity to express their perspective on the issues reported; and all three are likely to be portrayed in a negative manner, either through explicitly negative claims or through association with negatively tinted issues. Still, the rank-order of under-representation, lack of prominence and/or negativity in presentation has not been established. Research on media construction of various social groups has seldom been done in a set-up that would allow inter-group comparisons and authorize conclusions as to the nature of presentation relative to other groups in the society. A study by ter Wal et al. (2005) regarding the position of ethnic minorities vis-à-vis the (ethnic-Dutch) majority, a study by Lubbers et al. (1998) comparing the media construction of various ethnic groups and a study van de Bruin (2005) on the representations of ethnicity in Dutch TV series constitute in this respect notable exceptions,² at least in the Dutch context. Moreover, to my knowledge, only one such study has been conducted with respect to various age groups in the Netherlands (Wierstra 2001), whose imaging in the media has in general received a meagre amount of research attention.

The current study constitutes an attempt to fill this gap by examining the differences in the media representations of the various social groups, i.e. by investigating the presentation of groups vis-à-vis one other. Taking into consideration the structure of the sample, I have (1) compared the amount and forms of media attention offered to the young and the old, (2) examined the differences in the media images of the allochthon and the autochthon youth, and (3) de-constructed the mediated “allochthon” by investigating the media presentation of the various sub-groups of ethnically non-Dutch minority. Specific research questions addressed in the study relate to the *visibility and prominence* of various groups in the news media coverage

2 Comparative perspective is also assumed in the research by Phalet and ter Wal (2004) on the differences in the presence and discursive practices of Turkish, Moroccan and autochthon speakers in press articles related to Muslims and Islam in the Netherlands.

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and the *nature of their presentation*. The latter has been assessed with respect to *the homogeneity of presentation* and *evaluation*, where *evaluation* has been explored along two independent dimensions: *warmth* and *competence*.

Attention to the two dimensions of evaluations has been inspired by the insights from the Stereotype Content Model (SCM) and BIAS map (Fiske et al. 2006; Cuddy et al. 2008), which state that not all seemingly negative (positive) images are equally or rather similarly negative (positive) and not all evoke similar emotional and behavioural response. In fact, few groups enjoy unequivocally negative or positive stereotypes. Usually, individuals and groups are rated differently on two separate dimensions of stereotypic evaluation – “warmth” (benevolence, morality) and “competence”, where “warmth” entails traits such as fairness, helpfulness and kindness vs. hostility and aggression, and “competence” comprises possession of skills, talents and capabilities, or lack of them (Cuddy et al. 2008). Elderly, for example, tend to be rated high on traits related to warmth and low on traits associated with competence, and some ethnic minorities (e.g. Jews and Asians in the US) are likely to be seen as competent yet not warm. Unequivocally negative stereotypes – negative evaluations on both dimensions – are reserved for groups seen as parasitic, e.g. the homeless and welfare recipients in the US; unequivocally positive stereotypes are set aside for the in-group and the high-status (reference) groups.

The extent to which the two-dimensional content of stereotypes is reflected in the media messages has not been widely investigated. A study by van Selm et al. (*date unknown*) on the re-presentation of seniors in Dutch TV commercials demonstrated that older characters tend to be presented as both warm and competent, which could indicate a departure from the dominant “warm but incompetent” stereotype but for the negative connotations inherent in the messages communicated. The authors noted a discrepancy between the content level of messages (positive traits attached to the characters presented) and the meaning construction level of the messages (negativity conveyed in the genuine message), which draws special attention to the role of context. After all, negative perceptions of and feelings towards the object of description may arise not only from the explicitly negative statements but also from the sheer association with negatively evaluated social phenomena, such as conflict, drama, controversy, violence or deviant behaviour (e.g. d’Haenens and Bink 2006), but also ageing (Martin et al. 2009).

3. Data and method

To assess the dominant media images of the population groups under study, a content analysis of daily newspapers, TV news editions and an on-line news engine in two research periods was carried out. The sample consisted of news items from the most widely used sources of (political) information, including two national newspapers – *de Volkskrant* and *de Telegraaf*, two broadcasting news programmes – *NOS journaal* (8 pm edition) and *RTL nieuws* (7:30 pm edition), and the most popular internet news provider – *nu.nl*. *De Volkskrant*, with an estimated circulation of 260.000, is the biggest Dutch quality newspaper, read especially by the higher educated, the young, the well-off and the non-religious; it is also the second most popular paid newspaper among the Dutch allochthons. *De Telegraaf*, the largest Dutch paid newspaper with a circulation of 620.000, is the most widely read Dutch daily. Although it is considered to be a popular newspaper with a lot of space devoted to entertainment, it is read by people of various social backgrounds; it is also widely read by ethnic minorities (cf. Bakker and Scholten 2009; Peeters and d’Haenens 2005; Stichting Omroep Allochtonen 2001; Mediamonitor Commissariaat voor de Media 2008). The public *NOS journaal* is the most widely watched TV news title followed by the commercial *RTL A nieuws*. Although *NOS journaal* is universally watched, it is predominantly followed by older (50+) viewers; younger viewers frequently prefer the evening editions of *RTL A nieuws* (Mediamonitor Commissariaat voor de Media 2008). Finally, internet-based *nu.nl* is one of the five most widely followed news titles (Mediamonitor Commissariaat voor de Media 2008) and one of the ten most popular internet sites in the Netherlands (Bakker and Scholten 2009). As any other internet source, it is particularly popular among ethnically Dutch youth; older members of the public (55+) tend to consult internet (news) sources rather infrequently (van Ingen et al. 2007).

The two research periods selected for the analysis encompass a period of so-called crisis reporting (17 May – 02 June 2010) and a period of routine reporting (16 November – 02 December 2010). Crisis reporting indicates reporting over and following a specific “crisis” situation (cf. Staes 1996; Vliegthart and Roggeband 2007), such as a remarkable event (e.g. 9/11) or a pre-election campaign. Some researchers indicate that the differences between routine reporting and crisis reporting relate to volume, i.e. the amount of attention devoted to particular issues, rather than to quality, i.e. types of representations (frames) used to depict those issues. The crisis reporting selected for our analysis encompassed the parliamentary elections campaign and could be classified as an institutional crisis (cf. Vliegthart and Roggeband 2007). As a routine reporting period, a period following the formation of the new government was selected.

The newspaper and website articles were selected on the basis of their verbal content, i.e. the presence of specific key-terms.³ The TV news-items were selected and coded on the basis of their verbal and non-verbal (visual) content. Only articles and news items that mentioned (a) human being(s) (actors), such as “a student”, “the elderly”, or “asylum seeker” were selected for the analysis. This excluded from our sample a large pool of articles and news items that referred to abstract concepts and phenomena, such as “pension arrangements”, “pension funds” or “immigration”, yet contained no human actors. In principle, to be selected for coding, actors had to meet either the criterion of age (young: 15-35 years of age, or old: 55+) or ethnicity (being referred to by ethnicity or a term signifying a migrant origin). This meant that actors described as “young” or “students” yet aged 15 or less were not coded. However, actors referred to as “young” whose exact age was not reported and could not be inferred from the context were always coded. Also, actors selected for the analysis on the basis of their migrant origin were always coded, regardless of their age. To be coded, an actor (understood as an individual or collective – group, organization or institution, which could be classified as belonging to or, in case of organizations, representing the allochthons, the autochthons, the old or the young) had to be referred to (verbally or – in case of TV news verbally and/or visually) at least twice.⁴ To extend the range of possible contexts (news items) in which actors might feature, a maximum of three actors per news item/article were coded. Basically, only domestic news, i.e. news related to events, developments, debates etc. in the Netherlands were coded. For a foreign news item to be coded, the situation or event reported must have taken place in Europe and must closely resemble the situation in the Netherlands (e.g. the situation of older workers in Germany, the election programme of an anti-immigrant party in Switzerland or the arrest of terrorist suspects in Brussels).

The analyses presented in this report have been conducted on two sub-samples. The first, consisting of 380 news items and including 543 actors (young and old) selected on the basis of the above mentioned age indication, formed the basis for the comparisons between the old and the young and between the young autochthons and the young allochthons. The second, consisting of 215 news items and 332 actors, was used for the analysis of the representations of the various sub-groups of the allochthon population. All the articles (571) and actors (824) were analysed by means of content analysis. Content analysis is frequently conceptualized as a quantitative technique which allows a systematic study of large corpuses of text (Neuen-dorf 2002:10). It is a technique that offers “precise, objective, and reliable observations about the frequency

3 The use of search-string as a sampling method was necessitated by a small scale of the study and the unfeasibility of analysing all the news messages that appeared in the selected news outlets in the periods under study. You can find the search-string in Appendix I.

4 As “individuals”, actors could be public figures, representing an institution or organization but also members of the general public.

with which given content characteristics occur either singly or in conjunction with one another” (George 2009 [1954]). The coding process could be conceptually divided into two levels. The first level, called the “news-item” level, involved coding of the general information about the article or TV news item and its focus (topic) and entailed a holistic look at the various elements of the news-story. At the second level, “the actor level”, the article was broken into utterances (acts of speech, claims) based on the actors/characters they described or evaluated and the source (speaker) to whom this utterance (description, evaluation) can be ascribed. The content analysis was completed by the author and two trained coders. The inter-coder reliability tests conducted on a sample of 12% of news stories, randomly selected from the news items included in the sample, produced Krippendorff alpha ranging from .76 to 1.00 for the measures relevant to the analysis. The coding of the valence (positive vs. negative) and the dimension (warmth vs. competence) of the evaluations proved most problematic. This may be related to the methodological difficulties, noted also by van Selm et al. (*date unknown*), in assessing the two dimensions of the stereotype content model and the already mentioned discrepancy between the content level and the meaning level of the messages. Yet, a qualitative analysis of the statements/claims reported *verbatim* by the coders as evidence of a negative, positive or ambivalent depiction of an actor in the news-item, showed another possible source of bias. While the coding of the general nature of evaluations (positive vs. negative) proved sufficiently consistent on the actor level, the coders seemed to interpret the same or similar content differently when coding media reports about different types of actors. To give an example, allusions to being sick and infirm tended to be coded as a sign of incompetence and judged as negative evaluations in case of older actors, yet not necessarily in case of younger actors (e.g. young people with disabilities).⁵ Eventually, the results with respect to positive and negative evaluations presented in the subsequent sections are based on a qualitative re-analysis of statements extracted from the news messages in the process of coding as well as the comments/notes generated by the coders with respect to every coded actor. They shall be therefore seen as indicative only and not generalizable.

5 In line with the Social Identity Theory, this bias might be attributable to the tendency of the young coders (students) to assign positive attributes to the in-group (the young) and the negative attributes to the out-group (the old). However, research by van Selm et al. (2008) has not confirmed the existence of such a bias with respect to age-stereotypes: the young coders’ ratings of the media material were only partly associated with their stereotype of the elderly in the society.

3.1. Operationalisation of key variables

Visibility and prominence

Visibility of various groups has been measured by a number of news stories featuring a specific type of actor. The prominence of various groups has been measured as:

- (1) the ratio of front page articles (in printed and on-line news) or headline news (in visual media) to the total number of stories per group;
- (2) the relative importance of actors within the news stories on a scale from 1 to 3, where 1=detail and 3=focus of the story;
- (3) an index of prominence equal to “relative importance” (on a scale 1-3) multiplied by the length of the story (measured by number of words in the body text of the story or the number of seconds in TV news-items) and divided by 100;
- (4) the proportion of actors within each category that is given the opportunity to express their views;
- (5) the proportion of “expert” speakers among the actors with voice (per category).

Homogeneity of presentation

The degree of homogeneity of presentation has been measured by the proportions of various types of actors per category. Here, a distinction has been made between individual actors, individual exemplars-representatives of a wider category, and group actors.

Evaluation

Negative evaluation has been measured through a series of variables, including:

- (1) featuring in an article with a negative overall theme; the operationalization of “negative or threatening theme” differed per groups of actors compared – for the comparison of older and the younger actors, it included public order, conflict and defence, demonstrations, ageing, accidents and catastrophes in “broad” conceptualization; or public order, conflict and defence and demonstrations in “narrow” conceptualization; for the comparison of the sub-groups of younger actors, it included public order, conflict and defence and demonstrations in “broad” conceptualization and public order and demonstrations in “narrow” conceptualization; for the comparison of sub-groups of ethnic actors, it included public order, conflict and defence and demonstrations, where 0=no association with negative theme and 1=association with negative theme;

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- (2) presentation as a perpetrator, where 0=not reported as a perpetrator and 1=reported as a perpetrator;
 - (3) presentation as a terrorist (incl. terrorism suspects), where 0=not reported as a terrorist and 1=reported as a terrorist;
 - (4) presentation as a victim of a crime or maltreatment, where 0=not reported as a victim and 1=reported as a victim;
 - (5) presentation as a beneficiary of public goods, where 0=no beneficiary and 1=beneficiary;
 - (6) other explicitly negative qualifications, where 0=no negative qualification and 1=negative qualifications.

Positive evaluation is measured by a dummy pertaining to explicitly positive qualifications, where 0=no positive qualification and 1=positive qualification. Both positive and negative evaluations have been recorded on the basis of statements extracted from the news messages in the process of coding as well as the comments/notes generated by the coders along two dimensions: warmth and competence. A positive evaluation was considered indicative of the benevolence of the actor if his/her character, behaviour or intentions were described in terms of friendliness, kindness, agreeableness, helpfulness, charity, honesty and trustworthiness; it was considered indicative of the competence of the actor if their character, behaviour or intentions were described as (indicative of being) smart, motivated, devoted, persistent, skilful, industrious, intelligent, etc. A negative evaluation was considered indicative of the coldness of the actor if (s)he was presented as unfriendly, disagreeable, unkind, dishonest, free-loading, abusive, aggressive, hostile, threatening, etc.; it was considered indicative of the incompetence of the actor if they were portrayed as foolish, unintelligent, careless, forgetful, weak, etc. Any reference to physical disability, infirmness and/or mental or physical vulnerability (e.g. loneliness, addiction to alcohol) has been coded under incompetence, which included also references to prolonged or protracted education (in case of students). The latter might appear arbitrary. Protracted education might be also interpreted as free-loading and associated with lack of benevolence.

4. Findings I: the old and (the various sub-samples of) the young

4.1. Visibility

The structure of the sample included in the current analysis, together with the information of the actual share of the relevant groups in the Dutch population, is shown in Table 1. It clearly shows the overrepresentation of the young actors (77.9% in our sample vs. 52% in reality) and underrepresentation of the older actors (22.1% in our sample vs. 48% in reality). In case of both groups “generic” and “ethnic-less” description predominates. Referred to as “the old”, “a pensioner”, “a youngster” or “a group of students”, etc., actors are most of the time devoid of their ethnicity. Remarkable is the relative media visibility of the allochthon youth, whose ethnicity is mentioned (comparatively) far more often than that of the autochthon youth. Striking as well is virtual invisibility of the allochthon old, even though in case of the older actors the interethnic differences in visibility are practically absent.

Table 1. Relative media visibility of different groups of the population (old vs. young)

	Sample*		Share in the population aged 15-35 and 55+
Young	(N=423)	77.9%	52%
Young autochthon	12.2%		38%
Young allochthon	9.6%		14%
Young “generic”	56.2%		
Old	(N=120)	22.1%	48%
Old autochthon	3.5%		41%
Old allochthon	0.4%		7%
Old “generic”	18.2%		

* The sample consists of actors that could be classified as “young” or “old” on the basis of either age or some other age indication, e.g. described as “youth” or “elderly”.

The structure of our sample determines the extent of our analysis. Since ethnically non-Dutch elderly are almost absent from our data, we cannot venture any comparisons between the autochthon old and the allochthon old. Also – for reasons of comparability – the assessment of the differences between the presentation of the older and the younger citizens has to be conducted on a sub-sample limited to the ethnic-less and autochthon actors. Consequently, for the subsequent analysis of the media representations of the old and the young, a subsample of 489 actors has been used; for the analysis of media representation of various

subgroups of the young a sub-sample of 423 actors. Of the older actors included in our analysis (118), the specific age of 22 characters has been reported, ranging from 58 to 98, with a mean age of 82.3 and median age of 82.5. Of the 317 younger generic actors, the youngest was 15 years old and the oldest 33 years old, with a mean age of 20.6 years, a median age of 20 years, and a modal age of 17 years; only seven actors (2%) were older than 25. The age of the autochthon youth, if reported (in 31 cases), ranged from 15 to 33 years, with a mean of 22.5 years, a median of 23 years and modes of 17, 24 and 26. The age of the allochthon youth (reported in 13 cases only) ranged from 14 to 34, with a mean of 20.8, a median of 19 and a mode of 17; only 2 actors are older than 25.

The gender of most of the actors in our sample is unknown (in case of roughly 54% of both younger and older actors no inference with respect to gender could be made). Yet, once the gender of the actor is reported and/or can be inferred from the context (use of pronouns, name, etc.), there seems to be more men than women among younger actors (24% vs. 10% respectively), whereas among older actors the gender distribution is even: 19.3% of both sexes. Once we look at the sub-groups of younger actors, there appears to be a great imbalance in the information provided about allochthon and autochthon actors: in case of non-native youth, gender could not be inferred for 28.6% of the actors, for the native Dutch youth this was true in only 4% of the cases. This might be related to the fact that autochthon youth is less anonymous and more often introduced by their names. The imbalance in gender representation is greater for allochthon than for autochthon youth: there are only 12.2% of females (vis-à-vis 53% of males) among non-native youth as compared to 22% of females (vis-à-vis 71% of males) among ethnically Dutch youth.

4.2. Prominence

The prominence of the various (groups of) actors can be inferred from the prominence of the news items in which they feature (e.g. on the front page in case of newspapers or in the headlines in case of TV-news) and their relative importance within the news story (see Table 2). The results with respect to the young and the old are illuminating. Of the actors coded within these two age categories, only 22 appeared in front page articles or in the headlines of TV-news editions, 17 of which were young and 5 of which were old. This could indicate greater visibility of the young actors in the news reporting. Yet, if we consider the ratio of prominent to non-prominent actors per group under study, the difference between the old and the young is actually negligible and statistically non-significant. Interestingly, of the young actors, the allochthon are more prominent in the news than the autochthon: 13.5% of young allochthon actors appeared on the

front page or in the TV-news headlines as compared to 6% of the young autochthon actors (difference statistically non-significant) and 4.3% of ethnic-less (generic) sub-group of the young (significant at $p=.05$ level).

Table 2. Relative prominence of different groups (old vs. young)

	Older (55+) (N=118)	Younger (15 – 35) (N=371)	YOUNGER (15 – 35)		
			Generic (N=305)	Autochthon (N=66) (ref. category)	Allochthon (N=52)
% headline/ front page news	4.2	4.6	4.3	6.1	13.5 ^a
Mean within-story prominence	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.2	2.0
Index of prominence - press	8.8	10.2	8.8 ^{†††}	17.4	10.9 ^{††a}
- TV	1.8	3.7	3.7	3.7	4.6
% actors with voice	31.4	38.0	29.8 ^{***}	75.8	44.2 ^{***a}
% experts	13.5	22.0	14.3 ^{**}	36.0	8.7 ^{**}

Pearson's Chi-square: *** significant at $p=.001$; ** significant at $p=.01$.

t-test: ††† significant at $p=.001$; †† significant at $p=.01$.

^a difference (also) significant with respect to the generic category (at $p=.05$).

The prominence of the actors can also be detected by comparing their relative importance within news stories. The comparison of the average amount of “news space” devoted to specific groups of actors does not reveal any statistically significant differences between the groups under study. Once the length of the news is taken into account – after all, it is not the same to be the focal point of a short agency news item and an extended feature article – the difference in average within story importance between the old and the young remains statistically non-significant across both print and visual news media. At the same time, the difference between allochthon and autochthon youth featuring in print media gains in significance, with the latter group being, on average, awarded more space in the news (17.4 for autochthon youth vs. 10.9 for allochthon youth, $p=.01$). Interestingly, the prominence of ethnically Dutch youth is higher not only in comparison to the allochthon youth but also, and even more so, when compared to the “generic”, “ethnic-less” youth. The differences between the average importance of actors in visual media are statistically insignificant.

Finally, the prominence of the actors can be measured by whether or not they are given the possibility to contribute to the story by expressing their views and/or commenting on the events/problems described. A look at the proportion of actors who are indeed given such a possibility reveals no statistically significant differences between older and younger actors, even though the former are quoted or paraphrased slightly less often than the latter (31.4% to 38.0% respectively). There are, however, significant differences between the various groups of youngsters. Whereas almost 76% of ethnically Dutch youth get a chance to contribute to the story by being directly quoted and/or paraphrased, only 44.2% of non-ethnic Dutch youth are given such a possibility. Moreover, of the actors who feature in the news stories predominantly or exclusively as the source of opinion, a much greater proportion of autochthons than of allochthons (36% vs. 8.7%, $p=0.01$) enjoys an “expert” position. The disadvantaged position of the allochthon youth in this respect becomes even more apparent when the percentage of experts in the “generic” group is being considered. Even though “ethnic-less” youth are given fewer possibilities to present their viewpoint than the ethnically non-Dutch youngsters, they are roughly 1.5 times more often quoted in the role of experts.

All in all, it appears that as far as visibility and prominence of various groups of actors are concerned, there are no significant differences between the old and the young other than higher overall media attention devoted to the young. Even though the young feature in a much larger number of news stories, the relative visibility of news items and within-story prominence of younger actors does not differ significantly from the relative visibility and within-story prominence of older actors. There are also no statistically significant differences between the role ascribed to older and to younger actors within stories. However, some notable differences exist between ethnic and non-ethnic Dutch youth. While allochthon youngsters enjoy greater visibility measured by prominence of the news item in which they feature (front page article, a headline in TV-news) than autochthon youth, this does not translate into their within-story importance. Young autochthon actors are granted more media space and are awarded a more prominent role within the news stories than young allochthon actors: they are quoted more often and are more often awarded an “expert” position, which means they are often interviewed as representatives of specific organizations and/or persons knowledgeable about the issues that are being reported. The privileged position of the ethnically Dutch youngsters becomes particularly apparent when the information on the “generic” or ethnic-less youth is brought into picture.

4.3. Homogeneity

Most of the actors analysed are group actors, described as: the elderly, students, the inhabitants of a specific elderly house, or criminal youth, etc. Of the individual actors that feature in the news items analysed, most are individual human beings presented as of interest in their own; a small(er) proportion of actors are individuals-exemplars, typical representatives of a group they belong to (e.g. a student quoted to present the point of view of the majority of students, or a Moroccan girl, presented as a typical inhabitant of a particular neighbourhood). A negligible proportion of actors are presented as members or spokesmen of various organizations. There are, however, interesting between-groups differences (Table 3).

Table 3. Relative homogeneity of presentation

	Older (55+) (N=114)	Younger (15 – 35) (N=330)	YOUNGER (15 – 35)		
			Generic (N=278)	Autochthon (N=52) (ref. category)	Allochthon (N=50)
% of individual actors among non-institutional actors	30.7	25.5	18.7	61.5	48.0
% of group actors among non-institutional actors	62.3	67.3	79.1	3.8	32.0
% of individuals-exemplars, typical representatives of a group	7.0	7.3	2.2	34.6	20.0

When we focus on the non-institutional actors, there are more individual actors and fewer group actors among the ethnically Dutch youth (61.5% and 3.8% respectively) as compared to the non-ethnic Dutch youth (48.0% and 32.0% respectively). Moreover, while there are clearly more group actors among allochthon than autochthon youth, the proportion of individual-exemplars, typical representatives of a group is higher among autochthon than among allochthon actors (34.6% vs. 20.0%). This could indicate the propensity of journalists and/or media editors to award groups of autochthon youngsters a more “individualized face”, or alternatively a tendency to award ethnically neutral or mixed groups an autochthon rather than allochthon face. For example, when discussing the consequences of policy changes for the students, the media would frequently give a more detailed profile of or even voice to an autochthon rather than to an allochthon student. The fact that there are hardly any individual-exemplars among the ethnically neutral or “generic” actors seems to corroborate such a conclusion.

As far as different age categories are concerned, there are hardly any differences in the presentation of the old and the young actors: 67.3% of the young and 62.3% of the old actors are group actors, 30.7% of the old and 25.5% of the young are individual actors, and 7% of the old and 7.3% of the young are presented as individual exemplars of the group they belong to. The differences between the old and the young are statistically insignificant.

4.4. Evaluation

The differences in the media representation of various sub-groups become most apparent when we consider the various aspects of their (negative) evaluations. As illustrated by the results in Table 4, the youth, and especially, the allochthon youth, are presented in a (much) more unfavourable light than the old.

Table 4. Differences in the evaluation of various groups: percentage (absolute number) of actors with a given characteristic

	Older (55+) (N=114)	Younger (15 – 35) (N=329)	YOUNGER (15 – 35)		
			Generic (N=278)	Autochthon (N=51) (ref. category)	Allochthon (N=49)
% threatening theme (broad ⁱ)	27.2 (31)	32.2 (106)	25.5 (71)	21.6 (11)	40.8* (20)
% threatening theme (narrow ⁱⁱ)	15.8 (18)	24.9* (82)	25.5 (71)	19.6 (10)	32.7 (16)
% perpetrators	2.6 (3)	11.2** (37)	11.9 (33)	7.8 (4)	22.4* (11)
% terrorists ⁱⁱⁱ	-	-	0	0	4.1* (2)
% victims	18.4 (21)	10.9* (36)	10.4 (29)	13.7 (7)	10.2 (5)
% beneficiaries	50.0 (57)	25.2*** (83)	25.9 (72)	21.6 (11)	14.3 (7)
% beneficiaries (other than old-age pension or scholarship)	35.2 (31)	16.3*** (48)	16.9 (42)	13.0 (6)	12.5 (6)
% negative evaluations	25.4 (29)	35.0 (115)	37.8* (105)	19.6 (10)	55.1*** ^a (27)
% positive evaluations	31.6 (36)	27.7 (91)	21.6*** (60)	60.8 (31)	26.5** (13)

Samples limited to non-institutional actors.

Pearson's chi-square: *** significant at $p=.001$; ** significant at $p=.01$; * significant at $p=.05$; in case of younger actors – autochthon as reference category.

^a Difference significant also with reference to generic category ($p=.05$).

ⁱ Broad theme includes themes regarding public order, aging and accidents in case of younger/older comparison; or themes regarding public order and terrorism (without aging or accidents) in case of young allochthon/autochthon comparison.

ⁱⁱ Narrow includes themes regarding public order without terrorism.

ⁱⁱⁱ Among 38 terrorists (suspects) coded in the data (total sample of 839 actors) 14 represent younger actors (13 young allochthones and one young actor unspecified qua ethnicity), yet only two of them are described in the news as youth or young and as such included in the sub-sample on which the above analysis was conducted.

This is reflected in a number of overtly negative statements (% negative). The difference between the ethnically Dutch and non-Dutch youth is particularly explicit: allochthon youngsters are 2.8 times more often described in negative terms. The blatantly negative evaluation of allochthon youth is further exacerbated by the relative infrequency of positive evaluations: whereas only 26.5% of allochthon youth enjoys an explicitly positive appraisal, more than 60% of autochthon youngsters does so. Of relevance here is also the compilation of negatively loaded descriptions. Allochthon youngsters are almost three times as often described as perpetrators of crime or public order offenders than ethnically Dutch youth (22.4 % vs. 7.8%); a difference that cannot be accounted for by the number of terrorists suspects. Last but not least, they feature almost twice as often as autochthon youth in news stories whose main theme can be conceived as “threatening” (i.e. it touches upon public order, conflict and defence and demonstrations). Interestingly, the latter discrepancy decreases (and becomes statistically non-significant) once the “threatening” theme is re-defined by excluding the “conflict and defence”

sub-theme, which – upon a careful inspection of the data – frequently boils down to “terrorism”. The negative overall evaluation of the non-ethnic Dutch youth becomes particularly apparent when the results with respect to “generic” category are inspected: the presentation of the allochthon youth is not only more negative than the evaluation of the ethnically Dutch youngsters, but also more negative than the depictions of the “generic” youth.

The differences in the evaluation of the old and the young appear to have a slightly different nature. While younger actors are more often ascribed an explicitly negative characteristic or behaviour than older actors (35% vs. 25.4%, respectively), the discrepancy between the evaluation of the older and the younger actors is less prominent than between the younger allochthons and the younger autochthones. Moreover, both sub-groups, the young and the old, get an equivalent amount of positive attention. Still, the young are 4.3 times more often than the old represented as perpetrators or public order offenders. They are also more often associated with “threatening” themes (public order, conflict and defence, or demonstrations). Interestingly, once the repertoire of negatively loaded themes is broadened to include “aging” and “accidents and catastrophes”, the difference between the young and the old disappears. This could indicate that the meaning of “negative” or “threatening” may be relative and may depend upon the group under investigation. Last but not least, the older actors are twice as often as the young represented as beneficiaries of the social security system or broadly understood public funds, which – in the context of the on-going debates on austerity measures and the negatively valenced discussions on the social security abuse by migrants, might convey an air of negativity. This difference does not disappear when actors receiving the age-related quasi universal (non-means-tested) benefits (old-age pension or student grants) are eliminated from the analysis.

4.5. The dimensions of evaluations

As could be expected on the basis of SCM, the content of both positive and negative evaluations differs substantially per group analysed (see Appendix II). Among the negative depictions of the older characters, descriptions of sickness, poor health, infirmness, physical, mental and emotional vulnerability, all of which could be regarded as signs of incompetence (Cuddy et al. 2005, 2008; Fiske et al. 2006). In case of younger actors, the negative descriptions touch almost as often upon hostility and/or problematic and threatening behaviour as upon lack of skills, motivation and/or capabilities (where the latter includes descriptions related to prolonged education), which could indicate a more varied depiction of younger characters than of older actors. This pattern changes, however, when positive evaluations are examined. Once awarded a posi-

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tive evaluation, the young appear exceptionally competent yet not necessarily very warm, whereas the old appear both warm and competent. This could imply substantial complexity of the evaluative (re-)construction of both old and young in the media, with the old being relatively often associated with positive counter-stereotypes (competent) and the young with negative counter-stereotypes (incompetent). At the same time, however, our results do not depart substantially from the socially dominant representations: senior actors are more often presented as incompetent (negative evaluation) than younger characters, while younger actors are more frequently depicted as competent (positive evaluation). Furthermore, younger actors are more often associated with unfriendliness or even hostility (“not warm”) than older characters, whereas older actors are far more readily than younger actors presented as warm and friendly. We can therefore conclude that the presence of counter-stereotypes (“seniors are active and clever”) does not actually challenge the relative position of the elderly on the two stereotype dimensions – in relation to younger actors, older characters are more often presented as warm and less often as competent.

Among the younger actors, allochthon youth are more frequently associated with hostility, unfriendliness, or otherwise problematic behaviour than ethnically-Dutch youngsters or the generic, ethnic-less youth. They are also less likely than other groups of youngsters, and especially the autochthon, to be associated with competence. Interestingly, while autochthon youth appears to be more often evaluated as incompetent than the allochthon youth, in half of the cases these portrayals refer to sickness, disability or other kinds of vulnerability. What commands attention is the journalistic or editorial reluctance to evaluate ethnically Dutch youth along the dimension of warmth. Only a small minority of autochthon youngsters are described as either aggressive, hostile or generally unfriendly (i.e. not warm) or – alternatively – as warm, friendly and helpful, whereas more than half of the allochthon youth is judged as either warm or lacking warmth.

4.6. Differences between the outlets

The visibility of various age groups does not differ substantially between the media outlets (see Appendix III). The young constitute a more popular age group for all the news outlets and there seem to be no major differences in the relative popularity of the younger and older actors between the outlets. With respect to the ethnic origin of younger actors, differences between the outlets are more apparent. While *de Volkskrant*, *RTL nieuws*, and *nu.nl* devote more attention to native than to non-native youth, for *NOS journaal*

the reverse it true. The imbalance in the number of native and non-native youth is largest in *RTL nieuws*.

With respect to the nature of the description (positive vs. negative), there appears to be more between-outlets variability in the description of older than of younger characters, and most uniformity in the description of specific sub-groups of younger actors: native and non-native youth. In both *de Telegraaf* and *de Volkskrant* positive evaluations of older actors exceed the negative ones; in *NOS journaal* the positive and negative evaluations of the old balance out; in *RTL 4 nieuws* none of the older actors is awarded any evaluation, either positive or negative; and in *nu.nl* negative evaluations outnumber the positive ones.

In case of younger actors, the differences between the outlets are less apparent. Negative evaluations dominate positive evaluations in four out of five news outlets analysed, yet whereas in *RTLA nieuws* and *nu.nl* there are three times as many negative as positive evaluations, in *NOS journaal* and in *de Volkskrant* the difference is rather modest. In case of *de Telegraaf*, positive images of younger characters (both generic and autochthon) are more numerous than negative descriptions. However, once we look at the specific sub-groups of younger actors, it becomes obvious that the apparently positive image of the youth detected in *de Telegraaf* does not embrace the allochthon youngsters.

In general, the number of positive evaluations of the autochthon youth exceeds the number of negative evaluations in all the news sources but one (*nu.nl*). In case of the allochthon youth, the reverse is true: in four out of five outlets the negative evaluations exceed the positive ones, with *NOS journaal* being the only news edition that presents more positive than negative descriptions of non-native youth. On the whole, there are not many differences between the outlets: except for *nu.nl* all present autochthon actors in a more positive light than allochthon actors. Particularly negative about non-native youth is *de Telegraaf*, with the highest number of negative and smallest number of positive evaluations. The picture that emerges from *nu.nl* is most balanced: both groups of youngsters receive more negative than positive evaluations.

5. Findings II: the (un)varying faces of allochthony

The analyses conducted so far show that the allochthonous youth is portrayed in the Dutch news media more negatively than the autochthonous youth. Young allochthons are presented more homogeneously, occupy a less prominent position in the news and are subject to more negative evaluations, as is evident from the number of explicitly negative statements, being associated with a threatening theme and/or presented as a perpetrator of crime or public order offender. When seen in the light of previous research on the media representations of ethnicity, these results are hardly surprising. The question, however, remains, to what extent this “aggregate” picture of the “allochthon” gets nuanced when particular groups of migrants are being described. In other words, are there any within-group differences in the media depictions? Past research indicated that some intra-group differences do exist. Lubbers et al. (1998) has shown that at the beginning of the 1990s, Moroccans and Turks were more often associated with problems or law violation than Surinamese, Antilleans and people from the former Dutch Indies, who in turn were more frequently described as committing a crime than South Europeans. Of the groups analysed Jewish people were least often associated with problems or described as perpetrators of crime or associated with problems other than discrimination.

In what follows, the analysis presented so far for the groups of old and young actors will be replicated for the sub-groups of allochthon actors to investigate (potential) discrepancies in the presentation of various groups of migrants.

5.1. The structure of the sample

The structure of the sample included in the current analyses is shown in Table 5. Non-western allochthons, defined according to the Statistics Netherlands (CBS) as “every person living in the Netherlands of which at least one of the parents was born” in Africa, Latin America, Asia (with the exception of Japan and Indonesia) or in Turkey (CBS 2000), constitute a clear majority. Described in media messages either by their nationality (40,4%), by being Muslim or coming from a “Muslim country” (16,9%), or by some other reference to “non-western” origin, such as skin colour, being referred to as a “non-western allochthon” or coming from a “North African” or “South American” country, non-western allochthons amount to 66%

of the coded actors.⁶ If the group of asylum seekers and illegal immigrants, who usually originate from the same geographical areas as “non-western” immigrants, were added, then the sub-sample of non-western immigrants would constitute 68% of the migrant actors. Of the actors whose nationality is actually reported, Moroccans constitute a clear majority (64), followed by Turks (27) and Iraqi’s (11, 9 of which coded as asylum seekers and 2 of which coded as other/mix of nationalities). Of the Eastern European nationals, the Polish are mentioned slightly more often than other nationalities, yet usually also in combination with Romanians and/or Bulgarians.⁷

Table 5. Relative media visibility of different sub-groups of the migrant population

	Sample (N=332)	Share in the migrant population 2010 (CBS data)
Western		44.7%
Eastern European	7.5% (n=25)	33.3%*
Western (European)	1.5% (n=5)	
Indonesians/Indos/Moluccans	1.8% (n=6)	
Non-western		55.3%
Jewish	2.1% (n=7)	0.2%
Moroccans	19.3% (n=64)	10.4%
Turks	8.1% (n=27)	11.4%
Antillean and Aruban	0.3% (n=4)	4.1%
Surinamese	1.2% (n=4)	10.2%
Other or mix of non-western nationals	9.6% (n=32)	19.0%
Other indication of non-western origin	8.7% (n=29)	
Ethnic-less Muslims	16.9% (n=56)	
Asylum seekers and illegal immigrants	12.0% (n=40)	0.5%**
Unspecified/unclear or western- & non-western mix	10.8% (n=36)	-

* In the 33.3% of Western migrants other than Indonesian, Europeans constitute the majority: 31.1% of all foreign population; migrants from Poland, Bulgaria and Romania constitute 10.2% of the European migrants, or 3.2% of the total migrant population.

** Asylum requests in 2010 relative to the total of migrant population.

At first sight, the structure of the sample might suggest a serious imbalance in the media attention to various migrant groups. However, considering the sampling procedure, which gave preference to non-Western allochthons and new migrants from Central and Eastern Europe, the under- and over-representation of various groups of migrants, and especially migrants of Western origin, is difficult to evaluate. Some tentative observations might be made only with respect to non-Western allochthons: whereas Moroccans and asylum

6 In their study of media construction of Muslims, Phalet and ter Wal (2004) and d’Haenens en Bink (2006) have observed the primacy of ethnic categorization reflected in the journalistic tendency to introduce Muslim actors (speakers) by reference to their ethnicity rather than religious affiliation. This trend is reflected in our data as well: the immigrant or allochthonous status of actors featuring in the news reports is identified in most of the cases on the basis of their ethnicity.

7 Nationals of former Yugoslavia (5) were coded as Eastern Europeans or, if referred to as such, as asylum seekers, as they were usually reported as members of a broader group of migrants.

seekers appear to enjoy striking conspicuousness in the news media, Turks, Antilleans and Arubans, and especially Surinamese seem to be grossly under-represented. Usually, such lack of visibility is interpreted as disadvantageous to minority populations. However, given the sampling procedure (the sample includes only those actors whose ethnic status has been explicitly mentioned), the under-representation of Surinamese and Antillean actors may in fact testify to their “commonality” or “domestication” revealed in the infrequent use of ethnic labelling.

Regardless of the reasons for and the interpretation of the imbalance in our sample, its structure determines the extent of the analyses and group comparisons that could be ventured. Groups particularly small in number (Surinamese, Antilleans, Indonesians, Moluccans, Jews and Westerners) have not been included in the group-focused analysis other than as a composite reference category of “other migrants”. The group-focused analysis has been further constrained to groups of migrants whose origin and/or classification have not raised any doubts: Moroccans, Turks, Muslims, asylum seekers and Eastern Europeans. The category of “Muslims” comprises actors whose ethnic origin has not been reported and whose non-autochthonous status has been inferred from their (ascribed) religious affiliation; the category of Eastern Europeans includes various actors of Central and Eastern European nationalities and ethnic-less actors described as Eastern European; the category of asylum seekers consists of actors described as asylum seeking, regardless of their ethnicity, if reported. For comparative reasons, results with respect to specific sub-groups of migrants have been juxtaposed against the composite category of “all other migrants”, consisting predominantly of actors of unspecified or mixed ethnicities (e.g. groups forming a mixture of Western and non-Western allochthons, Turks and Moroccans, Muslims and non-Muslims) but also actors belonging to groups that are small in number (e.g. Surinamese, Aruban, Indonesian, etc.). The results are summarized in Tables 6, 7 and 8.

5.2. Prominence

The results in Table 6 indicate that Moroccan actors appear most visibly in the news: almost twice as often as the reference category of “all other migrants” and eight times as often as asylum seekers. In fact, of the 32 migrant actors that appeared in a front page article or a TV news headline, 12 (more than one third) are Moroccan. Least visible in terms of news-item prominence are Eastern Europeans (of the 25 actors coded, none features in a TV news headline or a front page article), asylum seekers and Turks. Still, the differences between any specific group of migrants and the composite category of “other migrants” are statistically non-significant.

Table 6. Relative prominence of different sub-groups of migrants

	Other migrants (N=120) (ref. group)	Moroccan (N=64)	Turkish (N=27)	Muslim (N= 56)	Asylum seeking (N = 40)	Eastern European (N=25)
% headline/front page news	10.8 (13)	18.8 (12)	3.7 (1)	8.9 (5)	2.5 (1)	0
Mean within-story prominence	2.2	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.3	2.4
Index of prominence						
- press	9.5	8.8	15.9 [†]	10.1	9.6	11.5
- TV	3.6	3.4	2.4	1.9	2.6	0
% actors with voice	32.5 (39)	32.8 (21)	55.6* (15)	37.5 (21)	17.5 (7)	24.0 (6)
% experts	5.8 (7)	6.3 (4)	3.7 (1)	5.4 (3)	2.5 (1)	0

[†] *t*-test significant at $p=.05$.

* Parson's *Chi-square* significant at $p=.05$.

Strikingly, the hyper visibility of Moroccans is not reflected in their within-story prominence, which does not vary much between the various sub-groups of migrants. In fact, once the story length is taken into consideration, the Moroccan actors appear to attract only slightly more TV news attention and substantially less print media attention than the reference category of “other migrants”. Of the analysed migrant groups, it is the Turkish actors who are awarded the most prominent place within (print) media news coverage. The prominence of Turks is reflected not only in the relative space they occupy in the news (measured by the index of prominence) but also in the frequency of being given the opportunity to express their own perspective with respect to the events or phenomena reported. Of all the groups analysed, asylum seekers and Eastern Europeans are awarded least prominence in the news: their presence in headlines and front page news as well as the percentage of actors quoted is far below that of the reference category. Still, statistically speaking, the results obtained for Moroccans, asylum seekers and Eastern Europeans do not differ significantly from those obtained for the reference group of “other migrants.” In statistical terms, only the prominence of the Turks differs significantly (and positively) from the prominence of the reference actors, and only in respect to two measures of prominence: index of prominence in press and proportion of actors with voice.

5.3. Homogeneity

With respect to the homogeneity of presentation (Table 7) the data show considerable variation across groups under study. In general, actors with unknown, unclear or “multiple” ethnicities (Muslims, asylum

seekers, Eastern Europeans) are more often presented as groups than as individuals. Members of the Turkish minority enjoy most individualised presentation: 78.3% as compared to 39.5% of the reference category and 27.5% of the asylum seekers. Consequently, the Turkish(-Dutch) are least likely and the asylum seekers most likely to be presented as a group actor (13% and 72.5% respectively). Differences in homogeneity of presentation between other groups of migrants and the reference category are statistically non-significant.

Table 7. Relative homogeneity of presentation of non-institutional actors by migrant sub-group: percentage (absolute number) of actors on a given characteristic.

	Other migrants (N=114) (ref. group)	Moroccan (N=58)	Turkish (N=23)	Muslim (N= 48)	Asylum seeking (N = 40)	Eastern European (N=25)
% of individual actors among non-institutional actors	39.5 (45)	44.8 (26)	78.3 ** (18)	37.5 (18)	27.5 (11)	40.0 (10)
% of group actors among non-institutional actors	50.0 (57)	34.5 (20)	13.0 ** (3)	56.2 (27)	72.5 * (29)	56.0 (14)
% of individuals-exemplars, typical representatives of a group	10.5 (12)	20.7 (12)	8.7 (2)	6.2 (3)	0	4.0 (1)

*Pearson's Chi-square: ** significant at $p=.01$; * significant at $p=.05$.*

Interesting, although difficult to account for, is the frequency with which Moroccan actors are presented as individual-exemplars, or typical representatives of their (ethnic) group (twice as often as the reference category). It may indicate an on-going transition in the media representation of Moroccans from a fully homogenized generic category of “the Moroccans” into the individualised-type of presentation, enjoyed (already) by the Turks, which might, in turn, be symptomatic of the processes of “domestication”. On the other hand, however, taking into account the overly negative evaluation of Moroccan actors (see following sections), the high number of (negatively-evaluated) individuals that are “presented as representative spokespeople of the entire group” (ter Wal et al. 2005:938), might bias the overall picture and contribute unduly to the detrimental representation of the whole Moroccan population.

5.4. Evaluation

Finally, with regard to evaluations (Table 8), the results suggest a high degree of negativity attached to the depictions of Moroccans and migrants identified as “Muslims”, a fairly positive valuation of Turks, and an ambiguous representation of asylum seekers and Eastern Europeans. The negativity manifested in the media (re-)construction of Moroccans and – to a lesser extent – Muslims is evident from the frequent associations with threatening themes, higher than average number of perpetrators, and in particular terror-

ists, higher than average number of explicitly negative claims and lower than average number of explicitly positive statements. To be more specific, 48.3% of Moroccan actors, as compared to 30.1% of the reference category of “other migrants” and 20.8% of Turkish actors, feature in a news story whose main theme could be regarded as threatening. Moreover, more than three times as many Moroccan (26.7%) or Muslim actors (28.6%) as “other migrants” (8%), and almost seven times as many as Turkish actors (4.2%), are presented in news items on terrorism (conflict and defence). Moroccan actors are also more than four times as often as Turkish actors or asylum seekers presented as perpetrators or public order offenders (35%, 8.3% and 7.5%, respectively). Last but not least, Moroccan actors are more than twice as likely as Turkish actors to be subjected to explicitly negative comment (61.5 vs. 25 %) and less than half as likely to be awarded a positively-loaded description (20% vs. 58.3%). The results for Muslim actors are roughly similar: 51% of Muslim actors are associated with a negatively loaded characteristic and 18.4% with a positive feature of behaviour.

Table 8. Differences in the evaluation of various migrant sub-groups: percentage (absolute number) of actors on a given characteristicⁱ

	Other migrants (N=113) (ref. group)	Moroccan (N=60)	Turkish (N=24)	Muslim (N= 49)	Asylum seeking (N = 40)	Eastern European (N=25)
% featuring in a threatening story	30.1 (34)	48.3 * (29)	20.8 (5)	34.7 (17)	15.0 (6)	28.0 (7)
% featuring in a conflict and defence story	8.0 (9)	26.7 ** (16)	4.2 (1)	28.6 ** (14)	5.0 (2)	0
% perpetrators	25.7 (29)	35.0 (21)	8.3 (2)	30.6 (15)	7.5 * (3)	20.0 (5)
% terrorists	8.0 (9)	25.0 ** (15)	0	24.5 ** (12)	2.5 (1)	0
% beneficiaries	22.1 (25)	5.0 ** (3)	12.5 (3)	12.2 (6)	50.0 ** (20)	12.0 (3)
% negative evaluations	38.9 (44)	61.7 ** (37)	25.0 (6)	51.0 (25)	47.5 (19)	56.0 (14)
% positive evaluations	28.3 (32)	20.0 (12)	58.3 ** (14)	18.4 (9)	15.0 (6)	28.0 (7)

ⁱAnalysis (with the exception of “theme”) conducted on the sub-samples of non-institutional actors.

Pearson’s Chi-square: * significant at $p=.05$; ** significant at $p=.01$.

The negative and positive valuations of asylum seekers and Eastern Europeans are slightly less straightforward and more difficult to account for. Asylum seekers are least frequently presented in a story whose theme can be considered “threatening” in terms of public order and/or (national) security. They are also least frequently reported as perpetrators of crime and their share of explicitly negative evaluations is close to average (for similar results regarding asylum seekers, see Lubbers et al. 1998). However, it has to be kept in mind that references to the actual or projected costs of migration, generally adding to negative evaluation

of the migrants, have been coded, together with specific examples of benefit or public funds use, under the “benefit claim (actual and potential)”. In case of asylum seekers this claim is way above average (50% as compared to 22.1% for the reference category) and (more than) four times higher than for other migrant groups (ca. 12%). We can therefore conclude that the implicitly negative depiction of asylum seekers is embodied in the suggestion of the financial burden they (may) constitute for the Dutch society, either through the actual use of specific facilities, such as relief centres, or in the anticipated (ab)use of social security benefits. As far as Eastern Europeans are concerned, their evaluation would not deviate much from the allochthon average but for the explicitly negative evaluations, which are more frequent in case of Eastern European actors (56%). Indeed, Eastern Europeans are the only group analysed that does not differ significantly from the reference category of “other migrants” on any of the variables tested. In statistical terms, differences between Moroccans and the reference category of the “other migrants” are most pronounced.

A closer look at the nature of negative and positive evaluations (see Appendix II) reveals further inter-group differences. When presented in negative light, ethnic minorities are portrayed predominantly as lacking warmth: 65.5% of the negatively evaluated migrants are depicted as hostile, aggressive, dishonest, free-loading, etc. This number goes further up (to 79%), when all the references to “illegality” (qua residential and/or employment status) are being treated as characteristics associated with the dimension of warmth. Unfriendliness, aggression or hostility is most often ascribed to Moroccans and Muslims, and the issue of illegality is most frequently raised in case of Eastern Europeans and asylum seekers. The latter group is simultaneously least likely to be described as warm and – once presented in a positive light – relatively often depicted as competent. Of all the sub-groups analysed, Turks are least likely to be presented as “cold” and most likely to be portrayed as “warm”. Turks and Eastern Europeans constitute two groups with the highest incidence of mixed evaluations (i.e. evaluated simultaneously as competent and warm or as incompetent and cold).

5.5. Differences between the outlets

The amount and nature of attention devoted to different ethnic groups differs per news source outlets (see Appendix III). In general, most unequivocally negative about migrants appears to be *nu.nl*, followed by *de Telegraaf* and *RTL4 nieuws*. Of all the media investigated most positive about migrants are *de Volkskrant* and *NOS journaal*. In *nu.nl* negative evaluations of migrant actors are almost four times more frequent than positive ones. Moreover, in case of four groups of migrants: Turks, Muslims, Eastern Europeans and asy-

lum seekers, the negative evaluations (albeit small in number) are not counterbalanced by a single positive statement. Of the Moroccan actors featuring in *nu.nl*, nearly 62 % are evaluated in negative terms – this is more than any other migrant group under investigation. Even more negative in the presentation of Moroccan actors is *de Telegraaf*, where more than 73% of actors are awarded a negative evaluation not counterbalanced by any positive statements. Least negative about Moroccan actors is *NOS journaal*, where only 33% of Moroccan actors are presented in a negative light and where positive evaluations outnumber negative ones. In *de Telegraaf*, second in the ranking of most negatively presented actors appear to be Muslims – half of all the Muslim actors is awarded a negative description that is not counterbalanced by a single positive evaluation. *De Telegraaf*'s unequivocally negative description of Moroccans and Muslims contrasts with the more ambivalent description of Eastern Europeans: while the latter group of migrants is described in negative terms just as often, they are awarded some positive evaluations as well. Interestingly, Eastern Europeans are granted far less or virtually no attention in other media. Still, in *de Volkskrant* as well as in *nu.nl*, the negative evaluations of Eastern European migrants outnumber the positive ones.

In general, *de Volkskrant* constitutes the only medium under investigation where positive evaluations of migrant actors balance out the negative ones. However, when examined on the group level, the above statement appears to be true only for the cluster category of “other migrants” and the Turks. In case of other groups, viz. Moroccans, Muslims, Eastern Europeans and asylum seekers, negative descriptions outnumber the positive ones, even though the difference between the number of negative and the number of positive statements per group is less pronounced than in other media.

All in all, a predominantly negative picture of Moroccans is to be found in *nu.nl* and *de Telegraaf*. Yet, whereas the former allows for some positive evaluation of the Moroccan actors, the latter focuses on the negative only. Muslims are evaluated in predominantly negative terms in all analysed media, yet in particular in *NOS journaal*, where the share of negative statements relative to the number of Muslim actors is the greatest and where not a single positive evaluation is ventured. The slightly ambivalent picture of Eastern Europeans is to be attributed to their presentation in *de Telegraaf* and *de Volkskrant*, where their predominantly negative evaluation is partly counterbalanced by positive descriptions. Of all the media analysed, *RTL A nieuws* appears most neutral – nearly half of the actors described are not evaluated in either a negative or a positive way.

6. Summary and discussion

Starting from the assumption of a relationship between the content of stereotypes and the nature of social interactions, on the one hand, and the active role of the media in the formation and/or maintenance of stereotypes, on the other, this research aimed at investigating the images of three social groups: the young, the old and the allochthon that are conveyed in a variety of Dutch news media. In total, 571 news items or articles were analysed, originating from five news sources: two national newspapers (*de Volkskrant* and *de Telegraaf*), two TV news editions (*RTL nieuws* and *NOS journaal*) and one internet news engine (*nu.nl*), published or broadcast during two 17-days-long research periods in 2010 (17/05 – 02/06 and 16/11 – 02/12). In the course of the analysis, the visibility and prominence, the homogeneity of presentation and the evaluation of 824 (minority) actors featuring in the selected news items were inspected and compared across the (sub)groups under study.

The analysis showed an imbalance in the visibility (presence) of various groups of actors relative to their share in the Dutch population. While younger actors were clearly overrepresented in the media material analysed, with allochthonous youth granted particular conspicuousness, the older actors were underrepresented, and the ethnically non-Dutch elderly virtually absent. Similar imbalance existed in the media visibility of various groups of ethnic actors, with asylum seekers and Moroccans enjoying hyper-visibility and migrants from the Dutch Antilles, Aruba and Surinam being grossly underrepresented. The above differences were not unanticipated: previous research has already reported the relative inconspicuousness of older actors (Wierstra 2001; van Selm et al. 2007), comparative overrepresentation of allochthones among younger actors (e.g. ter Wal et al. 2005) and hyper-visibility of certain groups of migrants (e.g. Lubbers et al. 1998). Nonetheless, the differences in the media visibility of various groups of actors had an impact on the scope of analysis conducted: the comparison of the portrayal of the old and of the young media characters had to be restricted to the coverage of autochthonous and “generic” actors, i.e. actors whose ethnicity was not reported or who could be identified – either by their name or by other explicit reference – as native Dutch; the analysis of differences in reporting about the autochthonous and the allochthonous population had to be narrowed down to the sub-sample of younger actors; and the investigation of the media coverage of ethnically non-Dutch actors was bound to focus on the groups granted sufficient visibility: Moroccan, Turkish, Muslim, asylum seeking and Eastern European migrants.

As far as the content of the presentation of various groups is concerned, the current analysis showed few statistically significant differences in the media depiction of the (autochthon and ethnic-less) elderly and youth characters, yet noteworthy discrepancies in the media coverage of autochthon and allochthon youth. There were also striking differences in the description of various sub-groups of ethnically non-Dutch characters. To briefly summarize the results, the most notable discrepancies in the media portrayal of the older and younger actors appeared in their visibility, i.e. the very presence in the news media coverage, and (the nature of) their evaluation. Far more pronounced were the differences in the media depiction of the allochthon and the autochthon youth. Allochthon youngsters were granted less prominence, more homogeneity and more negative depictions than autochthon youth. Autochthon actors, on the other hand, enjoyed more prominence, less homogeneity and more positive evaluations than both the allochthon and the generic, ethnic-less youth. With respect to specific ethnic groups, most striking were the differences in the presentation of Turkish and Moroccan actors. While Turkish characters were relatively out of sight, they enjoyed considerable prominence in the news, measured by their relative within-story importance and the number of characters quoted. Their presentation was also most favourable: they were least often associated with negative themes or evaluations, and they were granted the greatest share of positive evaluations. Moroccan actors, on the other hand, were awarded exceptional visibility, measured by their overall presence in the news and featuring in a headline or front-page story, yet were not particularly prominent. They were also most often associated with threatening and/or otherwise negative evaluations or themes. Contrasts in the media depiction of other migrant sub-groups were less pronounced. Most interesting is the relatively high incidence of positive evaluations of Eastern Europeans (measured as a share of positive evaluations in the total number of evaluations) and a distinct character of negativity that could be traced in the descriptions of asylum seekers. In comparison to other non-ethnically Dutch actors, asylum seekers were less often associated with criminal or otherwise threatening behaviour, yet more often presented in terms of costs and burdens for the Dutch state and society. Figures 1, 2 and 3 give a graphic summary of some of the results.

Figure 1. Differences in presentation of older and younger actors

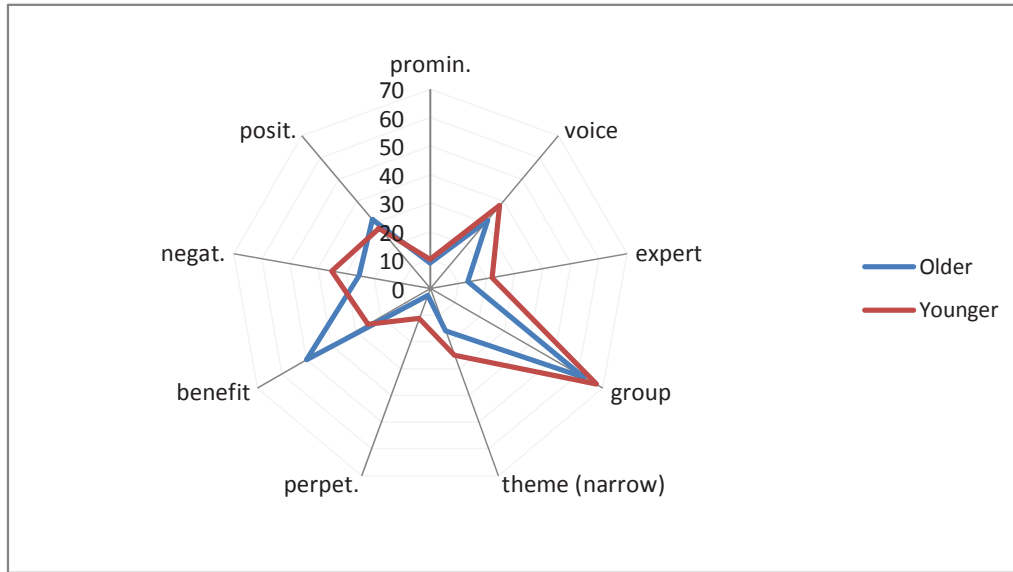


Figure 2. Differences in presentation of autochthon and allochthon youth

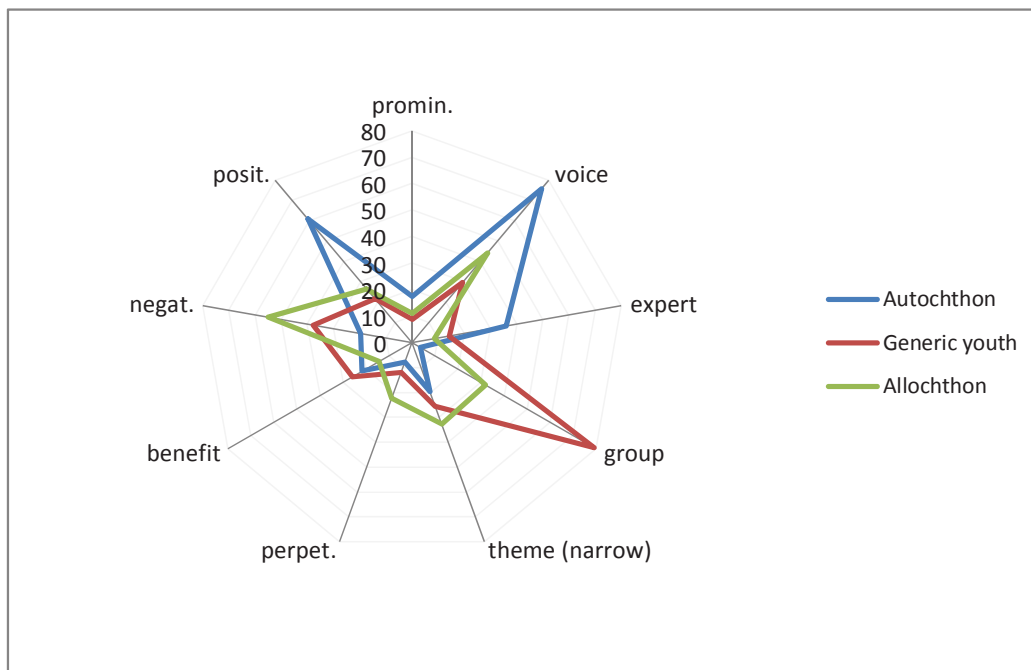
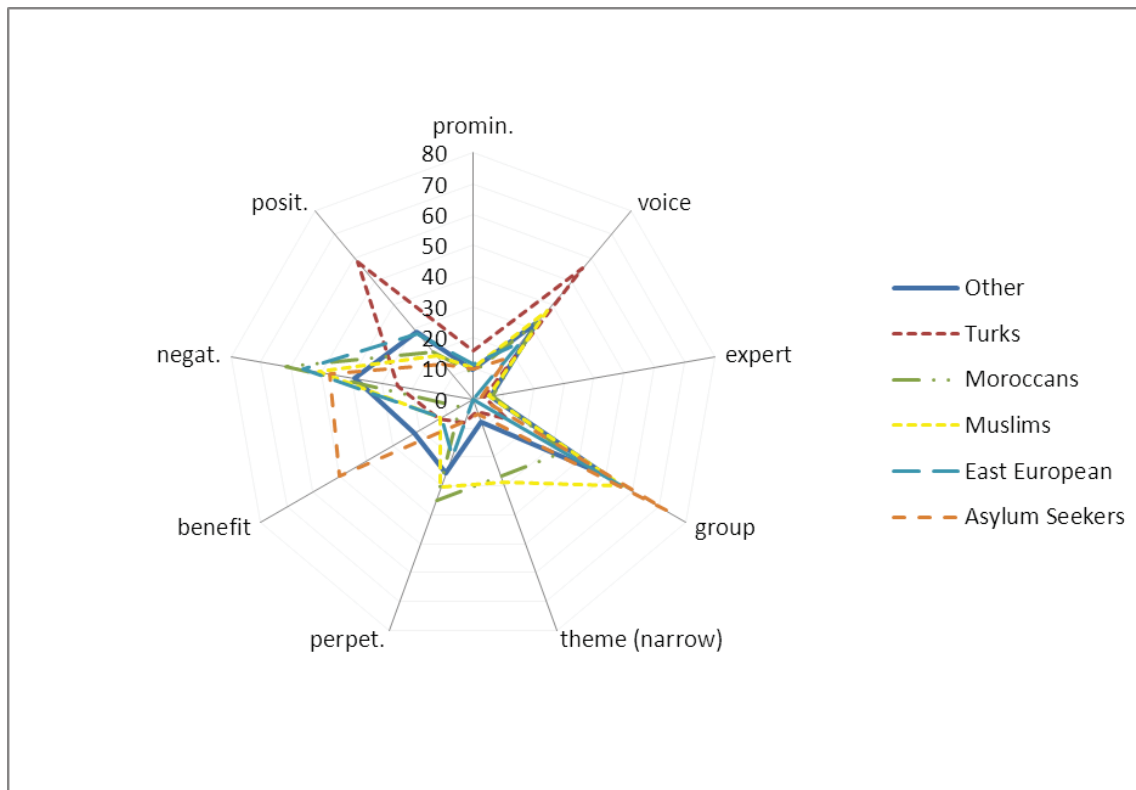


Figure 3. Differences in presentation of various groups of migrants



6.1. More or less strangers?

As stated in the introduction to this report, the study has been driven by the supposition of the active role of the media in determining and/or verifying group boundaries and, as a result, in strengthening or impeding the formation and persistence of social ties. One lingering question that remains to be answered pertains, therefore, to the social (group) boundaries that are inculcated – explicitly or implicitly – in and by the Dutch news media.⁸

In the light of the socio-psychological literature, and especially literature on social distance, the perceptual invisibility (or its opposite: hyper-visibility) of certain groups, their homogenisation and/or (indiscriminate) negativity of depiction could be indicative of the groups’ (social) estrangement and (cultural) “otherness” and suggestive of social distance between the group(s) and the (social or cultural) majority (Krumer-Nevo and Orly 2010; Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007; Fine 1994; cf. Tajfel 1982). Even though

⁸ One all too obvious criticism against the interpretation suggesting the (causal) agency of the media-makers propounded here, is the argument pertaining to the omnipresent journalistic pursuit of news values. Admittedly, being driven by the quest for news values that determine why particular stories make it into the news, journalists select the news that is “unusual” and/or “negative”, which frequently results in the ethnic minorities (“the unusual”) being presented in the context of “the negative”, such as “conflict, drama, controversy, violence and deviance” (ter Wal et al. 2005; d’Haenens and Bink 2006). Yet, considering the fact that search for news values is not exclusive to ethnic reporting, the reason for the exceptionally negative portrayal of specific ethnic groups must be located elsewhere. A number of researchers point to the fact that journalists themselves are part of the society immersed in the same repertoire of the socially shared representations and subject to the same prejudice (Gilens 1996; ter Wal et al. 2005; d’Haenens and Bink 2006).

the concept of social distance remains routinely beyond the theoretical framework of media analysts,⁹ a number of (recent) studies on the media construction of various social groups draw attention to the media practices of “othering”, i.e. practices of setting a social group apart as different. For example, when analysing the various elements of Irish print media portrayals of older people, Fealy et al. (2012), noted the dominant position of the “discourse of otherness”, which positioned older people as a “distinct social category” and “a group outside of or different to the average citizen” (p.96). Also, youth, presented in the context of their shortcomings, troubles and transgressions, have become the “other”; “a group to be protected, saved and/or feared”, consigned to the structural position of “theydom” (Mazzarella 2003; Hartley discussed in Mazzarella 2003:233).

The various practices of “othering” identified by media analysts in the media content, such as the use of group labels (e.g. “the pensioners”, “the over-70s”), homogenization and the ignoring of the within-group diversity (Fealy et al. 2012), the predominantly negative evaluations (Rozanova 2006), problematization or even – especially in case of the youth and ethnic minorities – criminalization (Lubbers et al. 1998; Mazzarella 2003; Faucher 2009), correspond to the strategies of “distancing” identified by the students of social distance. For example, in the processes of “distancing” crucial is the denial of the uniqueness of the “other”, apparent, *inter alia*, in the minimized perception of differences among the various others (Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007; cf. Tajfel 1982). Once set apart as “them” rather than “us”, the “others” are frequently homogenized and subjected to flat “binary forms of representation” (Hall 2002:229; cf. Fine 1994), and devoid of the contradictions and complexity that are inherent to “us”. In the context of (ethnic) categorization this often takes the form of lumping together different (immigrant) populations under some generic terms and overgeneralization of certain, usually negative, group characteristics (e.g. Kosic and Phalet 2006). The negative valence of the dominant representations appears often a too natural consequence. While “[w]e” are perceived as subjects who own emotions, rationality, capabilities, experiences, knowledge and will [,] the others are [customary] perceived as objects who lack complexity, motivation, rationality and capabilities” (Krumer-Nevo and Orly 2010). Such a stereotype naturally contributes to the denial of the visibility of the other and/or reluctance to recognize their voice and knowledge (cf. Krumer-Nevo and Orly 2010; Fine 1994).

9 This is hardly surprising in view of the dominant definition of social distance as the degree to which individuals and groups within a society feel sympathy towards one another and/or the extent to which they are prepared to interact, e.g. as marriage partners, neighbours, friends, colleagues, etc. (Bogardus 1925). Such a relational, affective and in essence subjective conception of social distance renders it unsuitable for assessment via media content.

The present study has not, indeed, given the nature of data, could not have aimed at establishing (the degree of) social distance between the various groups under study and/or between those groups and the imagined/assumed majority (i.e. the public of main-stream media). Still, the results obtained can be used to determine which social groups, if any, are more vulnerable to “othering” in the Dutch media and more in danger of being constructed as socially distinct, different or even deviant, which might in turn result in their possible relegation to the margins of society and exclusion from solidarity networks.

Comparison of their prominence in national news media, gives little support for the media “estrangement” of either the generic old or the generic young. Also the level of homogeneity in their description is similar for both groups. Some differences appear only with respect to their overall visibility in the national news media coverage and their evaluation. The underrepresentation of the old relative to the young might indeed, at least at first sight, suggest a greater “estrangement” of the old. Since the “other” is typically denied visibility and voice, the virtual invisibility of the older actors could be a sign of their “othering” and setting aside as more “distinct” than the youth. On the other hand, however, given the sampling procedure and the fact that the sample included only the actors whose age category (or ethnic status) has been explicitly mentioned, the underrepresentation of older actors, as well as the underrepresentation of specific ethnic categories – Surinamese, Antilleans – may in fact testify to their “normalisation” as evident from their infrequent description in terms of specific age or ethnic categorisation, or in other words: non-labelling.

Of far more consequence for the processes of “othering” might be differences in the evaluations of the old and the young. The core of the difference lies, however, not that much in the number of negative or positive evaluations as in their nature. The negative descriptors of older characters seem to relate more often to their (alleged) incompetence (poor health, infirmity, special social needs and dependencies), whereas negative depictions of younger actors appear predominantly related to their lack of warmth (hostility, problematic or threatening behaviour). In case of positive evaluations the reverse is true: older characters are more often than younger characters presented as warm and the young are more often presented as competent. Still, the incidence of positive counter-stereotypes is higher for older than for younger actors: senior characters are more often presented as competent (53%) than the young as warm (17%). This subtle difference might be of paramount importance.

Firstly, research on the content of stereotypes shows that “a person perceived as cold may sometimes behave in moral-social ways, but will continue to be perceived as unfriendly and untrustworthy”, whereas “a person perceived as incompetent, who presumably lacks the ability, can never behave competently with-

out challenging the perceived incompetence” (Cuddy et al. 2008:92). Secondly, both the negative warmth stereotype and the positive competence stereotype appear to be transitive (or “contagious”) and spread from one “infected” individual to other individuals in a social network. Hence, it is enough to know one competent elderly to start doubting the incompetence of all the older people in one’s network. In contrast, it is sufficient to be exposed to one hostile or problematic youngster to question the benevolence of other youngsters in one’s network. This illustrates the relative strength and stability of stereotypes related to judgments of hostility and non-benevolence and the relative mutability of judgements pertaining to competence. Thirdly, judgments of warmth carry more weight in inducing certain affective and behavioural reactions than judgments of competence (e.g. Lee and Fiske 2006). In other words, a group perceived as warm is more likely to experience facilitating behaviour than a group perceived as competent; at the same time a group perceived as cold is more likely to experience harm than groups seen as incompetent.¹⁰

All in all, we can conclude that while none of the two groups – the (non-allochthon) old and the young – is particularly “estranged” in media coverage, the nature of negative evaluations attached to younger actors makes them more susceptible to lasting “othering”. What makes the dominant media portrayal more detrimental to the young than to the old is the alleged difficulty of breaking the negative stereotype and the behavioural consequences of negative judgments with respect to lack of warmth.

The role of negative stereotypes in the processes of “distancing” becomes even more evident in case of the media depiction of non-ethnically Dutch minorities. In the data collected negative descriptors are particularly frequent in case of hyper-visible groups, such as allochthonous youth, Moroccans or Muslims. This is not a novel finding. A study by Lubbers et al. (1998) showed that media attention to social problems is higher for more numerous ethnic groups than for less numerous groups. Their study showed as well that the media devote more attention to groups that occupy a lower (or more distant) place in the socially shared ethnic hierarchy and that there is a correspondence between the place the groups occupy in the hierarchy and the media tendency to associate them with problems, crime in particular. It seems therefore that hyper-visibility of the allochthon youth, Muslim and Moroccan migrants in the news media might be inseparable from their negative evaluation and, at the same time, linked to their (more distant) position in the ethnic hierarchy. By the same token, the exceptionally positive media depiction of Turks, evident from the data, might be reflective of their higher, or less distant (at least relative to generalised, ethnic-less Muslims or Moroccans) position in the socially shared ethnic hierarchy. After all, as noted by Sniderman and Hagendoorn

10 Actually, researchers differentiate between active and passive harm and facilitation, where “active” refers to action and “passive” to restrain from action. Judgments of (in)competence lead to passive harm (facilitation); judgments of (lack of) warmth, to active harm (facilitation).

(2007), not “every minority group carries the same burden”. In fact, “there is a hierarchy of acceptability” with “some minorities [being] ranked more highly than others” (p.59).

A closer look at the nature of stereotypes conveyed in news messages reveals further differences in the construction of various ethnic groups and sheds additional light on practices of “othering” detectable in the news media content. Results presented in this report indicate that non-allochthon older and younger actors (i.e. generic and autochthon) are more frequently evaluated with reference to competence (i.e. judgments with relation to competence – both positive and negative – are more pronounced than judgments with respect to warmth), whereas ethnic groups (including allochthonous youth) are in general more readily evaluated with respect to warmth, particularly when the evaluation happens to be negative. This is not a trivial finding. According to social psychologists, in-group members tend to be evaluated primarily with respect to competence, while the evaluation of the members of the out-group appears to be determined by their perceived warmth. As noted by Phalet and Poppe (1997), the perceived desirability of competence-based attributes is higher for the in-group than for the out-group, for which the morality-based attributes are seen as most desirable. This is related to the fact that “competence-related terms are more accessible [as most salient and relevant] in the actor than the observer perspective, whereas moral categories are more accessible in the observer position” (e.g. Wojciszke 1994:230), but also to the fact that competence-related attributes are self- and in-group profitable (the actor and the group gains from efficiency), whereas moral (warmth) attributes are other-profitable (whether the actor is honest or friendly is more relevant for the other than for the actor him-/herself) (Phalet and Poppe 1997). Therefore, if interpreted in the light of the socio-psychological literature, the present findings provide clear evidence of the ethnicity-based in-group/out-group distinction concealed in the media messages, which might reflect, or contribute to, the heightened “distancing” of the non-native groups, and especially those to whom the judgments of lack of warmth are most liberally applied: the allochthon youngsters, the Moroccans and the ethnic-less Muslims.

The detrimental portrayal of most migrant groups is further reinforced by the reluctance to endow them with positive evaluations of competence. Describing them as non-benevolent, while simultaneously denying their competence, may situate them among or close to the low-status groups that are seen as openly parasitic. Such groups are most likely to elicit disgust and contempt, which, in turn, are likely to result in demeaning and condescending behaviour, involving neglect, exclusion and/or rejection (Fiske et al. 2006; Cuddy et al. 2008).

Particularly interesting in this context is the favourable media depiction of Turks. Not only is this ethnic minority awarded certain prominence in the news (once present), subjected to de-homogenization but also awarded an exceptionally positive evaluation, with judgments of warmth (friendliness, benevolence, kindness) prevailing over the judgments of competence. It seems therefore that Turkish migrants are less susceptible to the practices of “othering” – at least in the media – than other allochthonous groups analysed, and especially Moroccans and ethnic-less Muslims. While notable, this has not been entirely unanticipated. As observed by Sniderman and Hagendoorn (2007) on the basis of a national survey conducted in 1998, Turkish immigrants were perceived by the Dutch majority slightly more positively than Moroccans, who “are more likely than other minorities [i.e. Turks, Surinamese and refugees] to be characterised as dishonest, violent, intrusive, and not law-abiding” (p.48). However, since Sniderman and Hagendoorn observed only “minor” differences in social perceptions of the various migrant groups, the scope of difference in the media construction of Turks and Moroccans is rather surprising and seems to suggest a growing rupture in their social acceptability (or even desirability), or alternatively, a gap between public perceptions and media depictions.

More difficult to pin-point within the realm of social (or at least mediated) acceptability is the position of asylum seekers. Their average prominence, higher than average level of homogenisation and ambivalent evaluation make their position as subjects of “othering” difficult to judge. The data reveal an inclination of the news media to evaluate asylum seekers as less cold (at least in terms of violence) than Moroccans or Muslims and (slightly) more competent. In the light of literature on the content of stereotypes and their emotional and behavioural consequences, this could situate asylum seekers closer to “competitors”, i.e. groups that are perceived as “doing well for themselves” and admired for their hardworking and ambition, while, simultaneously, considered unsociable and aloof and feared for their ill intentions. Such groups are likely to elicit dislike mixed with “envious respect for their perceived competence” (Cuddy et al. 2008), which might encourage “convenient cooperation” in times of prosperity and scape-goating in times of austerity.

Last but not least, Eastern Europeans appear to resemble most the reference category of “other migrants”. Some differences (albeit statistically non-significant) are observable only in case of negative evaluations: Eastern Europeans are described in negative terms more often than “other migrants”: they are more often associated with being cold or incompetent and less frequently described as competent. In relation to other groups, Eastern Europeans seem to be situated somewhere in between Turks and asylum seekers, on the one hand, and Muslims and Moroccans, on the other.

Summing up, the analyses reported here indicate noteworthy differences in the media representation of various groups that might contribute to the collective drawing and/or reinforcing of group boundaries. While the differences might be inconspicuous (the old vs. the young), they are likely to have a lasting influence on the creation and/or maintenance of group relations. After all, as noted by Sniderman and Hagendoorn (2007) with respect to the perception of and attitudes to ethnic minorities in Dutch society,

“[d]ifference and deviance are the constitutive element of the ‘other’. Distrust naturally follows. ‘They’ will take what is ‘ours’, without making reciprocal contributions as they should; or following rules of proper and legal behaviour as they should, or exercising restraint and self-control to the extent that they should. Avoidance and fear is the response, empathy is switched off, and the focus is on self-protection” (p.44).

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APPENDIX I

Search-string used to sample articles and news-items relevant for the analyses:

moslim! OR islam! OR allochto! OR vreemdeling! OR immigr! OR migra! OR asiel! OR vluchteling!
OR minderhe! OR Marokka! OR Turk! OR Antillia! OR Aruba! OR Surinamer! OR Surinaams! OR In-
dones! OR Indisch! OR Moluk! OR Jood! OR Zigeun! OR afkomst OR komaf OR (nieuw! w/1 Nederland!)
OR nieuwkomer! OR Pool! OR Polen OR Roem! OR Bulgar! OR (Oost! w/1 Europ!) OR gastarbeid! OR
arbeid! OR nationaliteit! OR buitenlander! OR senior! OR oudere! OR bejaarde! OR gepensioneerd! OR
pensioen! OR AOW! OR 65! OR grootouder! OR (oud! w/1 Nederlander) OR (oud! w/1 persoon) OR
(oud! w/1 personen) OR (oud! w/1 vrouw) OR (oud! w/1 man) OR jeugd! OR jong! OR student! OR leer-
ling! OR scholier! OR autochto! OR inburger! OR integratie OR vergrijzing OR zorghui! OR zorgflat! OR
verzorging! OR woonzorg! OR generatie!

APPENDIX II

Dimensions of positive and negative evaluations. A summary of the qualitative analysis.

Tables 9-13. Frequency of various types of evaluations per age groups

Table 9. Elderly (autochthon and generic) (N=114)

		Negative evaluations			
		none	cold	incompetent	mix
Positive evaluations	none	56	2	18	2
	warm	9	0	6	0
	competent	18	0	1	0
	mix	2	0	0	0

Table 10. Young (autochthon and generic) (N=329)

		Negative evaluations			
		none	cold	incompetent	mix
Positive evaluations	none	148	36	50	4
	warm	10	4	1	0
	competent	52	8	10	1
	mix	4	0	1	0

Table 11. Young generic (N=278)

		Negative evaluations			
		none	cold	incompetent	mix
Positive evaluations	none	133	34	48	3
	warm	6	3	1	0
	competent	31	8	7	1
	mix	3	0	0	0

Table 12. Young autochthon (N=51)

		Negative evaluations			
		none	cold	incompetent	mix
Positive evaluations	none	15	2	2	1
	warm	4	1	0	0
	competent	21	0	3	0
	mix	1	0	1	0

Table 13. Young allochthon (N=49)

		Negative evaluations			
		none	cold	incompetent	mix
Positive evaluations	none	13	18	3	2
	warm	3	1	0	0
	competent	4	3	0	0
	mix	2	0	0	0

Table 14-19. Frequency of various types of evaluations for specific ethnic groups

Table 14. Moroccans (N=60)

		Negative evaluations			
		none	cold	incompetent	mix
Positive evaluations	none	16	20	4	8
	warm	2	2	0	0
	competent	4	3	0	0
	mix	1	0	0	0

Table 15. Turks (N=24)

		Negative evaluations			
		none	cold	incompetent	mix
Positive evaluations	none	6	3	1	0
	warm	5	0	0	1
	competent	3	0	0	0
	mix	4	1	0	0

Table 16. Muslims (N=49)

		Negative evaluations			
		none	cold	incompetent	mix
Positive evaluations	none	18	19	2	1
	warm	3	0	1	0
	competent	3	1	0	0
	mix	0	1	0	0

Table 17. Asylum seekers (N=40)

		Negative evaluations			
		none	cold	incompetent	mix
Positive evaluations	none	18	14	1	1
	warm	0	1	0	0
	competent	2	2	0	0
	mix	1	0	0	0

Table 18. Eastern Europeans (N=25)

		Negative evaluations			
		none	cold	incompetent	mix
Positive evaluations	none	6	11	0	1
	warm	1	0	0	0
	competent	2	0	1	0
	mix	2	0	1	0

Table 19. All other migrants – reference category (N=120)

		Negative evaluations			
		none	cold	incompetent	mix
Positive evaluations	none	42	33	3	4
	warm	6	1	0	0
	competent	19	1	1	0
	mix	2	1	0	0

APPENDIX III

Differences in presence and presentation per media outlet

Table 20. Presence and nature of evaluations per age group and media outlet (absolute number).

		Telegraaf (N=129)	Volkskrant (N=176)	RTL news (N=29)	NOS Journ. (N=18)	nu.nl (N=137)
Old						
	visible	44	37	5	5	27
	positive	17	15	-	1	3
	negative	12	10	-	1	6
Young						
	visible	85	139	24	13	110
	positive	29	48	2	3	9
	negative	22	55	6	4	28

Table 21. Presence and nature of evaluations of younger actors per ethnicity and media outlet.

		Telegraaf (N=100)	Volkskrant (N=157)	RTL news (N=25)	NOS Journ. (N=23)	nu.nl (N=118)
Young autochthon						
	visible	14	30	6	4	12
	positive	9	17	1	2	2
	negative	2	5	-	-	3
Young allochthon						
	visible	15	18	1	10	8
	positive	1	5	-	4	3
	negative	11	9	1	2	4

Table 22. Presence and nature of evaluations of various groups of migrants per media outlet

	Telegraaf (N=95)	Volkkrant (N=121)	RTL news (N=23)	NOS Journ. (N=35)	nu.nl (N=58)
Other migrants					
actors	35	42	8	17	18
positive	8	18	-	3	3
negative	17	12	3	4	8
Moroccans					
visible	15	14	8	6	21
positive	-	3	-	4	5
negative	11	6	5	2	13
Turks					
visible	7	15	-	4	1
positive	2	10	-	2	-
negative	1	3	-	1	1
Muslim					
visible	14	29	4	5	4
positive	-	8	1	-	-
negative	7	12	-	4	2
Eastern European					
visible	15	6	-	-	4
positive	5	2	-	-	-
negative	9	3	-	-	2
Asylum seekers					
visible	9	15	3	3	10
positive	2	4	0	0	0
negative	1	8	3	2	5

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